

Remarks of Jacquelyn Wilson
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Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education
Concerning the proposed changes to Common Core State Standards Implementation and Teacher
Evaluation

March 11, 2014

Good afternoon. My name is Jacquelyn Wilson and I'm a fifth grade teacher in Groton Public Schools. This is my fifth year teaching. I have taught kindergarten for three years and fifth for two.

As long as I can remember I have always wanted to become a teacher. I remember playing with my younger sister as a child and having her do "homework" as well as practicing her ABC's. As I grew up, my love for teaching never wavered. I volunteered in elementary classrooms both in high school and college which continued to fuel my passion for teaching by seeing the "behind the scenes" of teaching. This was the only career I have ever dreamed of having. When I made my choice to become a teacher, I did so because I love to teach children. There is something special about working with a child and watching them learn and grow. When a child is struggling with a concept, but then one magical day, a light bulb goes on and he/she can solve the problem as well as explain why he/she arrived at his/her answer, this is a very rewarding feeling. I became a teacher to help students succeed and become people who have a passion for learning. Unfortunately, this is not what is happening in our schools and unfortunately, after only five years of teaching, I have seriously begun thinking about looking for another career.

Students today have such high expectations put on them that they are giving up before they have even begun which has started to make them dislike learning and not want to explore discovering new concepts. My district, along with other districts around the state, have begun to implement programs which are based on the Common Core. The Common Core was made by starting at the end result and working backwards from there. There was no thought about

teaching standards being developmentally appropriate, the standard just needed to be in succession with the other grade levels. The programs are so scripted that there is no chance for students to get excited about learning anymore or to begin to discover concepts on their own. Every time I ask my students to take out their reading program workbooks or readers, they moan and sigh. They are bored doing these assignments. If you were ever trying to learn something that was boring to you, would you have the skills to remember the concept?

Not only can the work presented be boring, it can also be frustrating. When I taught kindergarten last year, my students now needed to learn 51 sight words by the end of the year when the year before, kindergarteners needed to learn 25 sight words to be on grade level. I had a student who came into kindergarten as a 4 year old and did not turn five until late November. He did not have any previous school setting so the beginning of the school year was a difficult adjustment for him because he did not know the letters in the alphabet, what any numbers looked like, let alone how to spell his name. By the end of the year, this very active boy who just turned five was able to spell and write his name, identify all the letters, read beginning reader books as well add and subtract numbers. When it came time to assess his sight words, he was able to get 30 of the words (which based on last year's standards would be on grade level). He told me that he is not a good learner and did not like school because he wasn't any good at it. How horrible is this that a five year old, who is just at the beginning of his educational career, is already giving up on himself? The frustration is apparent at the fifth grade level as well. I have students who just stop working and quit trying to figure out new problems because the demands are so high. I also see so many students becoming more and more anxious about testing. We are *constantly* assessing students. The objective of assessments is to guide your instruction, to see what students understand and to see where they are struggling. The assessments we are giving have no opportunity for us (teachers) to focus in on specific skills that students are having a difficult time for. It seems the objective of assessments has now become just a collection of data to prove what I am teaching instead of to show my students have mastered a skill. The education system is just trying to stuff as much information into children's brains as possible, but without being sure the students have the opportunity to fully understand the concepts. The focus is to get through all the units by the end of the year instead of to be sure students maintain their skills and fully understand the concepts.

Access to the same resources

Test-taking machines

High expectations

Then go on to write your remarks. When completed, submit your remarks to one of these 3 email addresses, depending on the certification area: